

8 April 2020

Information for partners and stakeholders

COVID-19 - update on our mental health and learning disability services

This is the first in a series of updates to our partners and stakeholders to inform you about how we are responding to the COVID-19 outbreak.

At this challenging and unprecedented time, like many of our colleagues across the NHS, we have needed to make some changes to the way we are providing our services. This will allow us to respond to the current COVID-19 outbreak and to keep our staff and service users safe during this challenging time. We anticipate any changes will be in place for the next 12 weeks.

Services for those who most need our support and care are continuing as normal. This includes all inpatient, urgent community and crisis services.

Urgent Referrals

Firstly, and most importantly our services remain open. Referrals can be made in the normal way via the Single Point of Access (SPA).

We have also enhanced our SPA service with increased psychological therapies now available directly through SPA.

The number is **0300 777 0707** and is operational 24/7. Email: hpft.spa@nhs.net

Please note the out of Hours Helpline number is still in operation (01438 843322) and will divert to the 24/7 SPA service.

Non Urgent referrals

Although our services remain open, we will not start any non-urgent treatment over the next 12 weeks. This is so we can focus on providing care and support for those who are the most unwell and in need of our services. For those making a non-urgent referral, it may be helpful if you can inform patients who are not requiring urgent/immediate support that they are likely to wait longer than normal to receive an appointment.

A&E Diversion Service

We have created a new service for people in mental health crisis to reduce their exposure to potential infection and to ease pressure on our local A&E departments.

- The new A&E diversion service provides a safe space for our service users who might attend A&E over the next few weeks and need a mental health assessment, or further assessment.
- Service users will be assessed initially in the Emergency Department alongside an ED Triage Nurse. If the individual does not require admission the mental health triage will make the relevant decisions about their care, which could include immediate discharge home (either with no follow up care required or appropriate support) or admission to the Diversion Hub for further assessment or to wait for a Mental Health Act Assessment.



- Staff working in the Hub will provide additional assessment, crisis care planning/single brief intervention or signposting to the right community based resource. These are all activities usually carried out by the Mental Health Liaison Team in the general hospitals. These hubs are located at our Lister ADTU in Stevenage and Orchards ADTU in Hemel Hempstead.

Inpatient Services

Our inpatient services all remain open. Visiting is restricted, with permission to visit only given in exceptional circumstances. In addition, we have reopened an inpatient unit at Elizabeth Court in Stevenage to care for any of our service users who become unwell with COVID-19. There has been a tremendous team effort involved in preparing the unit, which has all the equipment and staff that are needed to provide them with safe and high quality care.

Community Services

In line with national 'social distancing' guidance we are minimising all face-to-face contact with our service users where we can - to keep them and our staff safe. This means we have been changing the way we deliver care, including a reduction in face-to-face appointments, switching to telephone appointments instead and also postponing clinic appointments where this can be done safely. We have been contacting those service users whose care we are planning to change, directly by letter or telephone.

This approach covers the following community services:

- Adult Community Mental Health Team including Psychosis Assessment and Treatment in Hertfordshire (PATH)
- Community Mental Health Services for Older People (CMHSOP)
- Community Learning Disability Team
- Community Perinatal Team
- Adult Community Eating Disorder service
- Enhanced Rehabilitation Outreach Service
- Children and Adolescent Community Mental Health Services (CAMHS) including the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) team
- Children and Young Peoples Eating Disorder Service
- Wellbeing (IAPT)

The following community service remain completely unchanged

- GP+ Services
- CAMHS Home Treatment Team
- CAMHS Targeted Treatment Team
- Regular depot clinics

We are of course continuing to work jointly with our partners across the system and we hope you and your teams are keeping safe and staying well. We thank you for your continued support and understanding at this challenging time.